

Waiting in prayer with Zechariah

**Verse:**

Luke 1:5-20

Zechariah and Elizabeth

**Aim:**

To understand that praying comes with waiting



In today's session we meet Zechariah and Elizabeth.

For many years they had prayed for God to give them a very special gift. After years of waiting, their prayers were finally answered. Their son, John, would prepare the way for Jesus. Waiting for God to answer our prayers can be challenging, but it's important to remember that he isn't our heavenly Father Christmas ticking prayers off a gift list. As followers of Jesus we are part of a much bigger purpose on this earth, and sometimes we need to wait a while for our prayers to be answered.

Each child will need:

- Memory verse wristband
- Pens/pencils and paper
- Resources to create an Advent wreath – see Action It
- Explore It Ideas handout

You will need:

- Memory verse poster
- To create Advent wreaths for any child absent for this session (optional)



Start it

Ask the children to think of a well-known children's film or cartoon character. Make sure they don't tell anyone else who it is. Give the children a couple of minutes to write a Christmas list for that character, a list of presents their character would love to receive. Ask the children to read out their list and see if the others can guess the character it is for.

Ask:

- Have you written your own Christmas list yet?
- What one item are you really hoping to receive this Christmas?

Say:

In our Bible story today Zechariah and Elizabeth had been waiting a very long time for a precious gift. Rather than asking Father Christmas to leave the gift under the tree, this elderly couple had been praying to God for many years.



Sing it

Say:

Our memory verse for this month is extra challenging as it is two verses! We know you can meet the challenge, especially when the memory verse reminds us of good news.

Display the memory verse, read it through together and, if it helps the group, create actions to help them to remember it.

Memory verse

‘The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. Today your Saviour was born in David’s town. He is Christ, the Lord.”’

(Luke 2:10-11 *ICB*)

Say:

These two small verses from Luke chapter two brought the world a huge message of good news. Our song for today reminds us about the good news of Jesus Christ.

Song

‘Good News’ (official lyric video) by Vineyard Kids (2:14)



Tell it

Ask:

Is there something you have been praying for? If you feel comfortable, then share with the group what it is.

- How long have you prayed about it?
- How long would you be willing to pray about it?
- Would you keep praying for five, ten, fifteen years? What about if it was more than that?

Say:

In our story today we meet an elderly couple who had been praying for a child for many, many years. They thought that they would never be able to have a son or daughter, but God had different plans.

Read:

‘During the time Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah’s group [a group of Jewish priests]. Zechariah’s wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. Zechariah and Elizabeth truly did what God said was good. They did everything the Lord commanded and told people to do. They were without fault in keeping his law. But Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children. Elizabeth could not have a baby; and both of them were very old.

(Luke 1:5-7 ICB)

Say:

Zechariah and Elizabeth loved God very much and trusted him with their future. They had prayed for many years to have a child, but now, due to their age, it seemed like having their own children was not going to be part of their lives. Zechariah was carrying out his duty in the Temple when this happened ...

Video

Gabriel visits Zechariah by Superbook (1:27)

Ask:

How would you feel if an angel like Gabriel came to visit you?

Say:

It’s easy to understand why Zechariah felt confused and frightened, but the angel told him not to be afraid.

Ask:

- What message did the angel Gabriel bring to Zechariah?
- Why did the angel silence Zechariah?

Say:

As a priest, Zechariah would have been used to having plenty to say, but now he needed to wait quietly for the arrival of his son. God had answered his prayers, but not quite in the way that Zechariah expected.

Ask:

- Have you ever had to wait for God to answer your prayers? What did it feel like when he did that?
- Why do you think God sometimes makes us wait before he answers our prayers?



Say:

We need to be careful not to think of God as our heavenly Father Christmas, ticking off the prayers on our list like presents under the tree. God is not watching to see if we are being naughty or nice before he decides about our prayers. He loves us and wants to answer the prayers of his children.

Say:

God is a real, loving heavenly Father who has a purpose for our lives. He has a much wider perspective than we can ever imagine; and sometimes, just like Zechariah, he needs us to wait for this to be fulfilled.

Action it

Ask:

What is Advent?

Video

What is Advent? by Twinkl Educational Publishing (2:28)

Stop the clip at 1:15. (... and of course the fifth and final candle represents Jesus.)



Advent wreath

The aim is for the children to make an Advent wreath that they can add to each week. Today they will make the wreath and the first candle to take home. Over the next few weeks the other candles will be created as part of the Pray It section, to add to their wreath at home. In the final week there is an option of providing an electric tea light.

You may wish to make a few extra wreaths for children who are unable to join the first session.

There are many different ways that Advent wreaths can be created, and a list of links for resources is provided below.

- **Kids' Advent wreath (3D with paper plate version)** by looktohimandberadiant.com
- **Hope and Love Advent wreath (hanging paper wreath)** by bakerross.co.uk
- **3-D printable Advent wreath (3D paper version)** by drawn2bcreative.com

Pray it

For the next few weeks during Pray It the children will create a candle linked to the relevant Advent theme. Whichever method you use, the Advent candle for this week needs to include the word 'Hope'.

Say:

Our Advent prayer theme for this week is 'Hope'. The angel Gabriel brought a message of hope to Zechariah. After they had spent years praying, God promised that Zechariah and Elizabeth would have a son who would prepare the way for Jesus.

Say:

Sometimes when we look at the world around us, it can seem like there is little hope. God sent his son at Christmas to remind us that in Jesus there is always hope.

Give the children time to complete their Hope candle and attach it to their wreath. Ask the children to share what they hope will happen in the future. These hopes could be for their family or friends, or for the wider world. As they hold their Advent wreaths, incorporate their hopes into a prayer. An optional song is provided to bring the session to a close.

Song

'Hope' Kids Worship Song by Allstars Kids Club (3:50)

Explore it

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.



'Explore It!' is produced by the Children and Youth Department in collaboration with Kay Moorby (soulwithaiew)

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Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.



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Pray

Find a special place at home for your Advent wreath. Each day, take time to ask God to fulfil the hopes he has for you, your family, your wider community and the world.



Share

Show the people at home the Advent wreath you created in your Explore It session today. Each week you will be able to add a new candle to your wreath and share the theme with your loved ones. This week the Advent theme is hope. Watch this clip together.

Advent for Kids: HOPE (Week 1) – 5 Minute Family Devotional/ Kids Bible Story by Minno Bible Stories for Kids



Song for the week

'Good News' (official lyric video) by Vineyard Kids



Memory verse

'The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. Today your Saviour was born in David's town. He is Christ the Lord.'"

(Luke 2:10-11 /CB)

**LIVING
OUT FAITH**

Today's story is illustrated in this week's *Kids Alive!* The UK's only weekly Christian comic – filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more...and is now available to read online!

salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive.